

House of Representatives State of Tennessee



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Remarks by Madame Speaker Beth Harwell, January 11, 2011

My colleagues of the House, thank you for the honor you have bestowed upon me today. For me to be a part of the lineage of service and leadership to this great state is truly humbling.

In this chamber today there are 22 legislators who were sworn in for the first time. To those I say, this marks the beginning for a tremendous new chapter in your life. I still distinctly remember the first time I walked through those doors as a member of this body. It is a privilege very few Tennesseans will experience - Never, never take it lightly.

You and others here went through tough elections. But the elections are behind us. We must now tackle the more difficult task of governing.

America was built upon ideals and principals, and I will mention two today. The first is a strong belief that a government is best that is closest to the people. We believe in states rights and responsibilities. The second principal is that power comes from God and is bestowed upon the people, who then loan it back to us, as their elected representatives for a period of time. The beauty of our system is that the power is with the people. In this chamber, we are not Kings and Queens - we are servants. This is the People's House. Tennesseans expect us to represent them well and serve them honorably.

And so we are grateful to the voters of this state and our political activists, many who are here today, that have made this day possible. The people of Tennessee sent us a very clear message on Election Day. They are frustrated with the out-of-control spending in Washington and they do not want to see it here. They expect us to exercise fiscal restraint and make necessary cuts to balance the budget without raising taxes. We will do just that.

They are also tired of politics as usual. The bickering and stalemate that exist in Congress is not acceptable. I will always be true to the principles of the party that nominated me. I understand legislative debate. But over the years I have observed this body set aside partisanship and regional differences to do the right thing for

Tennessee. Because this body is made up of statesmen and the taxpayers of this state expect and deserve nothing less.

As I have said before we should always ask ourselves a set of questions before we vote on a bill:

- Does it increase the size of government?
- Does it make it easier to start and operate a business in Tennessee?
- Does it keep us moving forward in reforming our educational system to meet the needs of the 21st century?

The answers to these questions determine if Tennessee remains a great place to work and live.

Today also marks the beginning of a tremendous new chapter in our great state.

As your speaker I pledge to work well with our new governor and to work well with each member of this body. I know we will have disagreements but I will always treat each member with respect and fairness. You have given me an awesome responsibility. I will work everyday to be worthy of your trust.

There will be many tough choices and there is a lot of hard work ahead of us.

But as Teddy Roosevelt said, “Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.”

My colleagues, we have work worth doing and together, if we work hard, we will be successful.

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